

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO ALL AFRICAN DIPLOMATIC POSTS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LISBON IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE
USICA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
USINT HAVANA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BONN PRIORITY
USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY
CIA WASHDC 0000
NSC WASHDC 0000
DOD
XMT AMEMBASSY CONAKRY
AMEMBASSY ANTANARIVO
AMEMBASSY BAMAKO
AMEMBASSY BISSAU
AMCONSUL CAPE TOWN
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY FREETOWN
AMEMBASSY GABORONE
AMEMBASSY LOME
AMEMBASSY LILONGWE
AMEMBASSY MBABANE
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AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
AMEMBASSY NIAMEY
AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA
AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SOPN

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT OF STATE PRESS BRIEFING MAY 15, 1978

FOLLOWING IS AN UNOFFICIAL, UNCORRECTED EXCERPT FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE PRESS BRIEFING. IF NECESSARY OFFICIAL VERSION WILL FOLLOW.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANY CONFIRMATION -- INDEPENDENT CONFIRMATION -- THAT CUBANS ARE INVOLVED IN THE LATEST INVASION IN ZAIRE?

A. I DO NOT.

Q. DO YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON THERE?

A. WE DO HAVE SOME PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FROM OUR POST IN ZAIRE, BUT WE DO NOT HAVE MUCH MORE THAN WHAT YOU ALREADY KNOW OR HAVE SEEN. IT DOES SEEM THAT EX-KATANGAN GENDARMES HAVE INVADDED ZAIRE'S SHABA PROVINCE AGAIN -- WE PRESUME FROM THEIR BASES INSIDE ANGOLA. OUR INFORMATION IS THAT THERE IS FIGHTING IN KOLWEZI, THE PRODUCING CENTER OF ZAIRE'S COPPER BELT, AND THAT THE INVADERS MAY BE IN PARTIAL CONTROL. THERE ARE OTHER REPORTS THAT UNCLASSIFIED

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YOU HAVE SEEN THAT ANOTHER FORCE OF KATANGAN GENDARMES MAY HAVE ATTACKED MUTSHATSHA6 A RAILROAD JUNCTION BETWEEN KOLWEZI AND THE ANGOLAN BORDER. OUR IMMEDIATE CONCERN IS OVER THE SAFETY OF THE AMERICAN CITIZENS IN THAT AREA. OUR INFORMATION IS THAT THERE ARE BETWEEN 80 TO 100 AMERICANS IN KOLWEZI, MOST OF WHOM ARE EMPLOYEES OF THE MORRISON-KNUDSEN A U.S. ENGINEERING FIRM WHICH IS THE KEY CONTRACTOR FOR THE INGA-SHABA HIGH-TENSION LINS. SEVERAL PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS WHO WERE IN THE AREA HAVE BEEN WITHDRAWN. WE'RE SEEKING MORE PRECISE INFORMATION ON THE AMERICANS IN THE AREA. AS I THINK MOST OF YOU KNOW, WE HAVE, AS IS NORMAL IN A SITUATION LIKE THIS IN WHICH THE SAFETY OF AMERICANS IS INVOLVED, ESTABLISHED A TASK FORCE IN THE BUILDING TO MONITOR REPORTS AND INFORMATION AND TO DECIDE WHAT, IF ANY, STEPS CAN BE TAKEN TO INSURE THE SAFETY OF THE AMERICANS IN THE AREA. SO FAR, THE SCATTERED REPORTS WE HAVE ON AMERICANS INDICATES THAT -- WOULD LEAD US TO BELIEVE, AT ANY RATE -- THEY ARE WELL. WE HAVE HEARD ONE REPORT THAT A DEPENDENT CHILD -- AND I DO NOT HAVE THE IDENTITY -- OF ONE OF THE MORRISON-KNUDSEN EMPLOYEES WAS SLIGHTLY INJURED. WE'RE TRYING TO GET DETAILS ON THAT. I DON'T HAVE IT. I WOULD ADD THAT THE BELGIANS AND THE FRENCH ARE SIMILARLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE SAFETY OF THEIR NATIONALS IN THE AREA. THERE ARE SOME 2,800 BELGIAN AND APPROXIMATELY 400 FRENCH CITIZENS IN THAT KOLWEZI AREA. WE ARE IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH BOTH OF THOSE GOVERNMENTS AND ARE GOING TO TRY TO

COORDINATE ANY ACTIONS THAT WE MAY HAVE TO TAKE IN REGARD TO OUR CITIZENS. AS FAR AS POLICY ACTIONS OR POLICY RESPONSE, WE ARE AT THIS POINT TRYING TO GET MORE CONFIRMATION OF FACTS. I CAN'T OFFER YOU A DEFINITIVE COURSE OF ACTION BECAUSE WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH FACTS TO REALLY ACT UPON AT THIS MOMENT. WE ARE, AS WE WERE AT A SIMILAR TIME LAST YEAR, CONCERNED ABOUT THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF ZAIRE. WE REMAIN ATTACHED TO THE PRINCIPLE OF TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND ARE OPPOSED TO FOREIGN IN-
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TERVENTION, IF INDEED SUCH INTERVENTION IS INVOLVED.

Q. DOES THAT INCLUDE FRENCH INTERVENTION?

A. WE ARE, AS WE HAVE ALWAYS SAID, CONCERNED THAT ANY CONFLICT BE, WHEN AND WHEREVER POSSIBLE, CONFINED TO THOSE DIRECTLY INVOLVED.

Q. BUT THERE IS A SLIGHT CHANGE SINCE LAST YEAR BECAUSE THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE FMS PROGRAM FOR ZAIRE IN FY'79 IS PRECISELY TO HELP REBUILD THE ARMY AFTER LAST YEAR'S SHABA INVASION. HOW DOES THIS SORT OF MAKE THE U.S. ROLE A BIT MORE VISIBLE THAN LAST YEAR. COULD YOU ADDRESS?

A. WELL, OF COURSE, WE HAVE HAD A LONG-STANDING RELATIONSHIP WITH ZAIRE. OUR POLICY HAS ALWAYS BEEN AIMED AT THE WELL-BEING OF THE PEOPLE OF ZAIRE, AT THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THAT COUNTRY, AND AT PEACE IN CENTRAL AFRICA. THAT WAS TRUE LAST YEAR; IT'S TRUE NOW.

Q. WHEN YOU SAY YOU'RE CONCERNED, ARE YOU CONCERNED ENOUGH TO SEND ZAIRE LETHAL MILITARY EQUIPMENT IF ZAIRE REQUESTS IT?

A. WELL, THE QUESTION DOESN'T ARISE YET. WE WOULD, OF COURSE, HAVE TO STUDY A SITUATION AS WE UNDERSTAND IT AS IT DEVELOPS. WE WOULD ALSO HAVE TO TAKE UNDER CONSIDERATION ANY REQUESTS THAT ZAIRE MADE. BUT I WANT TO REPEAT THAT THAT QUESTION HAS NOT ARISEN.

Q. ACCORDING TO THE REPORT WE'VE SEEN THERE, ZAIRE ALREADY HAS ASKED THE AMBASSADORS OF THE UNITED STATES,
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FRANCE, BELGIUM, CHINA, MOROCCO FOR ASSISTANCE.

A. THAT IS A VERY UNSPECIFIC REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE.

Q. GIVEN THE FACT THAT YOU THINK KOLWEZI IS UNDER THE PARTIAL CONTROL OF THE INVADERS, AND THERE MAY BE AS MANY AS 100 AMERICANS THERE, IS THERE ANY CONSIDERATION BEING GIVEN TO EVACUATING THEM?

A. LET ME SAY ON BACKGROUND THAT OBVIOUSLY THAT IS A CONSIDERATION. THE PROBLEM ABOUT DEALING WITH IT IS THAT, ONE, WE ARE NOT TOTALLY SURE OF EXACTLY WHAT THE SITUATION IS THERE. WE ARE NOT TOTALLY SURE ABOUT WHAT THE AMERICAN-CITIZENS SITUATION IS PRECISELY, AND IT WOULD BE PREMATURE FOR ME TO SAY ON BACKGROUND OR ON THE RECORD THAT WE ARE PLANNING SOMETHING SINCE WE SIMPLY AT THIS POINT ARE NOT. BUT WE ARE CONCERNED AND WE ARE MONITORING IT.

Q. HOW MANY MISSIONAIRES ARE THERE IN THE AREA?

A. I HAVE REPORTS THAT THERE ARE A SCATTERED NUMBER BUT IT IS NOT AN APPRECIABLE NUMBER THAT I FIRST THOUGHT WERE INVOLVED. IN OTHER WORDS, A HANDFUL, AS OPPOSED TO A LARGER NUMBER.

Q. DO YOU KNOW WHETHER THE NUMBER OF AMERICANS HAS DECREASED FROM LAST YEAR?

A. I WILL HAVE TO GET FIGURES ON WHETHER THERE HAS BEEN A FALL OFF IN NUMBERS. I SIMPLY DON'T KNOW.

Q. FROM YOUR PRELIMINARY INFORMATION, DOES THIS SITUATION LOOK MORE TROUBLESOME, OR MORE HAZARDOUS FOR THE STABILITY OF ZAIRE THAN THE LAST TIME AROUND?

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A. IT IS, I THINK, FAR TOO EARLY FOR ME TO OFFER THAT KIND OF ASSESSMENT.

Q. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF REPORTS FROM THE AREA THAT ALLEGE THAT THE INVADING FORCE IN PART CAME FROM ZAMBIA, WHICH IS CLOSER TO KOLWEZI THAN ANGOLA. DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO SUPPORT THIS?

A. NO, I DON'T. I DO NOT WANT TO, HOWEVER, STAND HERE AND TELL YOU THAT THAT IS NOT SO. I SIMPLY HAVE NO INFORMATION AT THIS TIME WHICH WOULD LEAD IN THAT DIRECTION.

Q. ARE YOU IN CONTACT WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF ZAMBIA TO ESTABLISH WHETHER OR NOT THEY ARE PROVIDING SANCTUARY FOR THESE CIVILIAN FORCES?

A. LET ME TAKE THE QUESTION. I JUST DON'T KNOW WHETHER

WE ARE IN DIRECT DIPLOMATIC CONTACT ON THAT QUESTION.

Q. ALSO, THERE ARE A NUMBER OF THE REPORTS FROM THE AREA REFERRING TO THE INVADERS AS "REBELS" -- OURS, OF COURSE, REFER TO THE KATANGAN GENDARMERIE WHO CONSIDER THEMSELVES REBELS. DO YOU HAVE ANY INFORMATION OF SUPPORT FOR THIS INVADING FORCE FROM THE INDIGENOUS POPULATION?

A. NO. AT THIS POINT I DO NOT.

Q. HAVE WE INVITED THE ZAIRIANS TO MAKE A MORE SPECIFIC REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE THAT WE MIGHT RESPOND TO?

A. NO, I AM NOT AWARE OF SUCH A REQUEST ON OUR PART.

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Q. WE WOULD, I TAKE IT FROM WHAT YOU SAID THAT WE WOULD OPPOSE ANY FRENCH OR MOROCCAN TROOPS GOING DOWN THERE?

A. I AM NOT GOING TO IN FACT SPECULATE ON WHAT POSITION WE WOULD HAVE ON A NUMBER OF POSSIBILITIES. CLEARLY, AS I HAVE SAID, THE FRENCH HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT THEIR OWN CITIZENS THAT ARE THERE, AND WHAT THE GOVERNMENT OF ZAIRE DOES IN THIS RESPECT-- I AM SIMPLY NOT GOING TO TRY TO ANTICIPATE.

Q. YOU ARE NOT NECESSARILY OPPOSED TO INTERVENTION ON BEHALF OF THE ZAIRIAN GOVERNMENT?

A. THE QUESTION, QUITE FRANKLY, HAS NOT ARISEN AND I AM NOT GOING TO SPECULATE ON WHAT OUR POSITION MIGHT BE.

Q. HOW LARGE AN INVADING FORCE IS IT?

A. I AM NOT SURE THAT WE KNOW. I HAVE SEEN A NUMBER OF FIGURES USED. I AM NOT IN POSITION TO GIVE YOU A VERY ACCURATE FIGURE. THE ESTIMATES HAVE RANGED SO WILDLY AT THIS POINT THAT I THINK IT WOULD BE FAIRLY EARLY FOR ME TO TRY TO GIVE YOU ONE.

Q. ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT SEVERAL THOUSAND? IS THAT YOUR FEELING? OR ARE WE TALKING ABOUT A MUCH SMALLER FORCE?

A. THE INITIAL ESTIMATES OF THAT INITIAL--ATTACKS-- AND THAT IS THE BEST I CAN DO--WOULD FALL BELOW THE SEVERAL THOUSAND RANGE. BUT AT THIS POINT I SIMPLY HAVE TO TELL YOU THAT WE DON'T HAVE ENOUGH GOOD INFORMATION OF OUR OWN FOR ME TO OFFER YOU A FIGURE.

Q. DO YOU KNOW WHETHER THE FIGHTING HAS BEEN GOING ON AS REPORTED SINCE LAST TUESDAY?

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A. THE DATE TODAY IS THE 15; IT IS MY OWN FEELING THAT THAT WOULD BE SEVERAL DAYS EARLIER THAN WE HAVE ANY REPORTS.

Q. DO YOU KNOW WHETHER CUBANS STATIONED IN ANGOLA HAVE BEEN TRAINING OR ADVISING THE KATANGANS SINCE LAST YEAR'S INVASION? OR WHO IS MAINTAINING THOSE BASES? WHO IS ARMING THEM?

A. AGAIN, I DON'T KNOW.

Q. CAN YOU TAKE THAT?

A. I WILL TAKE THE QUESTION.

Q. WHAT IS THE STATUS OF MILITARY AID TO ZAIRE?

A. OUR CURRENT FISCAL '78 LEVELS OF ASSISTANCE TO ZAIRE ARE 10.5 MILLION IN DEVELOPMENT AID; \$18 MILLION IN FOOD AID, THE L-480, TITLE I; \$17.5 MILLION IN FOREIGN MILITARY SALES CREDITS; AND \$2.5 MILLION IN IMET, INTERNATIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING.

Q. OF THAT \$17.5, DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH THEY HAVE USED?

A. NO, I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH THEY HAVE DRAWN DOWN.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING ON THE TYPE OF ARMAMENT THAT THE INVADING FORCES ARE USING? IS THIS ALL SMALL ARMS? ARE THEY BRINGING IN 122 ROCKETS?

A. AGAIN, I JUST AM NOT AWARE OF THAT LEVEL AND I
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JUST HAVEN'T SEEN ANYTHING ON IT.

Q. WHO IS HEADING THE TASK FORCE?

A. I WILL SEE IF I CAN GET YOU THAT.

Q. ALSO, WHEN WAS IT SET UP?

A. I WILL GET YOU BOTH.

Q. HODDING, CAN YOU TRY TO MAKE IT A LITTLE MORE CLEAR WHAT OUR GENERAL POLICY IS TOWARDS ZAIRE'S NEED FOR

ASSISTANCE? DO WE BELIEVE THEY HAVE A LEGITIMATE NEED FOR ASSISTANCE IN THIS SITUATION, AND ARE WE SYMPATHETIC TOWARDS THEIR EFFORTS TO--I ASSUME WE ARE, SINCE YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT THEIR TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY.

A. YOU KNOW, OUR GENERAL FEELING ABOUT THEIR NEED IS EXPRESSED IN THE PROGRAMS THAT WE HAVE ALREADY. THE SPECIFIC QUESTION YOU ARE ASKING ME RELATES TO SOMETHING WHICH HASN'T ARISEN.

AS YOU KNOW, LAST YEAR, DURING SOMETHING PERHAPS SIMILAR TO THIS, HOWEVER, WE DID PROVIDE EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE. I SIMPLY AM NOT GOING TO SAY WE WILL OR WE WON'T. I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE SITUATION IS ON THE GROUND. I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE ZAIRIAN GOVERNMENT MAY BE CONSIDERING IN THE WAY OF A REQUEST.

Q. IN A WEEKEND SPEECH IN WHICH THEY THREATENED TO INVADE SOMALIA, MENGISTU SAID THAT THERE ARE AMERICAN ADVISERS AND THOUSANDS OF ARAB AND PAKISTANI TROOPS IN SOMALIA. COULD YOU COMMENT ON THAT?

A. WE DO NOT HAVE ANY AMERICAN ADVISERS ASSISTING SOMALIAN FORCES. I AM SIMPLY NOT ABLE TO COMMENT ON ANY UNCLASSIFIED

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OTHER PART OF THAT, BECAUSE I DON'T KNOW.

Q. HOW ABOUT THE THREAT ITSELF, ABOUT THE SITUATION BEING THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE TO INVADE SOMALIA?

A. I HAVE SEEN THAT REPORT. I DON'T HAVE ANY COMMENT ON IT. WE ARE OBVIOUSLY INTERESTED AND CONCERNED ABOUT THE SITUATION. BUT I DON'T HAVE A COMMENT ON THAT PARTICULAR SPEECH.

Q. HAS THE UNITED STATES AN AMBASSADOR NOW IN ADDIS?

A. NO.

Q. WHAT IS THE STATE OF PLAY ON THAT? I THOUGHT THAT ONE OF THESE MISSIONS HAD THE ACHIEVEMENT THAT MENGISTU AGREED THAT THERE SHOULD BE AN AMBASSADOR VERY SHORTLY.

A. LET ME TAKE THAT QUESTION.

Q. BACK ON AFRICA, THE SECRETARY TALKED ON FRIDAY ABOUT A NEW CONFERENCE ON NAMIBIA, OR SUGGESTED THAT THE FRONT-LINE STATES MIGHT CALL ONE WITH THE SWAPO REPRESENTATIVES AND THE CONTACT GROUP.

HAVE YOU HAD ANY REACTION TO THIS SUGGESTION?

A. I AM GOING TO HAVE TO TAKE THE QUESTION. VANCE

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